

Theological Soc.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL

OF THE

ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR SEAMEN,

AT GREENWICH,

On SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1789.

BY

CHARLES PETER LAYARD, D.D.F.R.S. & F.S.A.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE
OFFICERS OF THE ROYAL HOSPITAL
AT

GREENWICH,
WHO WERE PRESENT AT THE DELIVERY OF THIS
S E R M O N,

AND AT WHOSE REQUEST IT IS PRINTED,

IT IS THEREFORE INSCRIBED,

WITH THE HIGHEST RESPECT,

BY THEIR MOST OBEDIENT

AND VERY HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Discourse is committed to the Press in Defe-
rence to the Opinion of those Officers, who signified
their Wishes that it could be distributed among the
Seamen under their Protection and Government.
If its Effect should be the Preservation in their
Minds, of a due Sense of the Blessings they enjoy,
and of strict Attention to the excellent Instructions
they receive, the Object of printing it will be fully
accomplished.

A

S E R M O N, &c.

PSALM XCII. 4, 5, 6.

*Thou Lord hast made me glad through Thy
works, and I will rejoice in giving praise
for the operations of Thy hands.*

*O Lord, how glorious are Thy works: Thy
thoughts are very deep.*

*An unwise man doth not consider this, and
a fool doth not understand it.*

WHENEVER men of honest minds
and plain understandings, are to
be addressed upon any subject, which
highly concerns them, they ought to be

spoken to in the plainest manner. The importance of the information they are to receive, renders any obscurity in the communication of it absolutely inexcusable. Our Blessed Saviour preached His gospel to the poor as well as to the rich; and although His doctrines are the most sublime that ever were delivered to mankind, or that the apprehension of man can ever attain, they were preached by Him, and are recorded in the gospels, in words intelligible to the most common capacity. It is also very easy for every man, who carefully reads the holy scriptures, to find in them many parts and passages, that are wonderfully applicable to his own particular situation and circumstances; God having so graciously revealed the word of truth, that while the scriptures contain all things necessary for the general salvation of mankind, they at same time supply whatever is most efficacious towards the edification of every individual. I shall endeavour

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your to give you an example of this in the sacred text I have just read to you, and I shall endeavour to conform to the rule I have laid down, by doing this in the clearest manner, that you may so reap the greater advantage from the instruction I offer you. Give me your attention then for a short time, and may it please God to grant a blessing to the word now to be preached unto you.

In this text, the Psalmist thus expresses himself: "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy works, and I will rejoice in giving praise for the operations of thy hands. "O Lord, how glorious are thy works: thy thoughts are very deep! An unwise man doth not consider this, and a fool doth not understand it." Now I mean to assert, and to prove also, that there is not one thought in this passage of the Psalmist, but which ought to be entertained in the mind of every one of you; and indeed must be, if you re-

flect as becomes reasonable men and
 Christians, on your past trials and your
 present situation. To 'shew this, we
 will consider this passage in its several
 parts. The Psalmist first tells us, that
 " the Lord had made him glad through
 His works ;" that is, by the consideration
 of the power and majesty, the wisdom,
 loving-kindness, and mercy, which he
 had observed in his contemplation of
 them. And what destination is there in
 the world, what manner of life among
 those that are variously allotted to the
 sons of men, that gives them such op-
 portunities of beholding God's wonderful
 works, as that in which you have all
 been engaged? If you have often seen
 and felt the rage of contending elements,
 you must have a strong conviction of the
 power of that God, who raiseth the tem-
 pest at His word, and with a word com-
 mandeth the sea to be still. If you will
 call to memory those glorious appearances
 which

which the splendour of heaven, and the unbounded expanse of the ocean, have so often shewn you, in the variety of climates through which you have sailed, you cannot do otherwise than profoundly reverence the majesty of their omnipotent Creator. If you will consider how the nations of the whole earth are connected with each other, and the comforts and the conveniencies of the lives of all men are multiplied by that intercourse which navigation affords, you must acknowledge the loving-kindness of that God, who hath given to man wisdom to understand this important science, and endowed his heart with fortitude and bravery to enable him to defy and surmount the dangers of its practice. If you remember certain times when these may yet have failed, and all human efforts have sunk in despair; when “the deep opened her mouth to swallow you up,” or the devouring fire raging fiercely threat-

ened your destruction, or the violence of surrounding enemies had almost overwhelmed you ; if any of you, I say, now survives such hours of dismay as these, his heart must be filled, while I now recall them to his mind, with the grateful sense of the loving-kindness and mercy of God, who was his “ refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.” Surely then, every one of you has the strongest motives to join with the Psalmist, and, like him, “ to rejoice in giving God praise for these the operations of His hands.”

Let us now go on to the second part of our text, in which the Psalmist exclaims, “ O Lord, how glorious are Thy works : Thy thoughts are very deep !” In paying this tribute of reverence to the Most High, every one of you has also the strongest reason to join with the psalmist. From the time you first entered upon your profession, which is so

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precarious in itself, but so honorable to
 you, and advantageous to mankind, you
 must be sensible that you were under the
 protection of a wise and gracious Provi-
 dence, who has at length conducted you
 to a place of refuge, not only from the
 storms of nature, but from the troubles,
 the difficulties, and the temptations of
 the world. How many situations can
 most of you remember of such a sort,
 that, if any one had told you, when la-
 boring under your difficulties, that the
 divine goodness would not only extricate
 you from them, but one day would place
 you, for the remainder of your lives, in
 a state of security and comfort: you
 must then have answered; if it be pos-
 sible that I should once escape from this
 distress, and yet enjoy days of peace and
 satisfaction, how great must be the wis-
 dom of Him who can contrive this, which
 now seems beyond all hope: His thoughts
 must be very deep! In such times of
 distress,

distress, the consideration of our own unworthiness always increases our apprehensions. We think that there is reason enough, that the hand of God should be lifted up to punish: we fear that there is little hope that it should be stretched out to save us. If we implore his mercy, as we generally do most fervently at those seasons, we at the same time confess, that we cannot claim it; for we own ourselves to be miserable sinners: yet how many promises do we make, if it would but please him to spare us; how many resolutions of repentance and amendment do we form in our minds, if we might but be saved this once! Those who have made, and kept such promises and resolutions; those who have been unexpectedly rescued from such bodily dangers, their “cry to the Lord in their trouble” having been heard, and have, at the same time, escaped from the dangers of sin, and turned from the paths that lead
to

to destruction, being reclaimed by their sense of God's goodness, must surely now say unto Him, whose righteous judgments have occasioned their conversion, "Thy thoughts, O Lord, are very deep!"

But many of you, who have thus been protected, have seen others cut off or lost in a moment. Some of these, perhaps, were men of bravery, virtue, and piety, whom God hath thought fit thus to take to Himself, delivering them at once from the miseries of this world, and calling them to the eternal enjoyment of a better: others you may have seen snatched away suddenly in the midst of a profligate life, or even while their tongues were blaspheming the great name of Him, whose terrible judgments they experienced in death. Be assured, however, that in every one of these instances, the Judge of all the earth hath done right; and that He, without whose word not "even a sparrow falleth to the ground," well

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knoweth

knoweth when it is fit to destroy and when to save. In His excellent disposition of the fates of men, and of those numberless events which take place in his government of the world, while we acknowledge that His mercy is everlasting, we must at the same time confess that "His ways are past finding out, His thoughts are very deep."

Yet, notwithstanding the impression which the mercy and judgments of God ought to make on every man who experiences either, the Psalmist tells us, that "an unwise man doth not well consider this, that a fool doth not understand it." It is to be feared, indeed, that this too often happens; that some men, when dangers are past and difficulties surmounted, when the hand of the Almighty hath conducted them to peace, hath even spread a table before them, and made their cup to overflow, forget too soon the judgement they once dreaded,

ed, nay more, become insensible of God's mercy, even while they are enjoying the fruits of His bounty. They then relapse into those very sins which had before provoked His displeasure ; they forget all the promises they had made before him ; they abandon all their good resolutions, and thus add to their increasing offences the terrible crime of ingratitude, and rebellion against the Father of Mercies !

But cannot the same Judge again stretch out his hand to punish ? Cannot He who once saved us from sudden destruction wear us away in lingering misery ? And has He not more dreadful punishments in store after death for those who relapse into impenitence and rebellion ? I will forewarn you, saith our Lord, whom ye shall fear. " Fear Him, which after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear Him." How unwise, therefore, must we esteem that man, who runs into the danger of such condemnation

tion for want of considering such judgements as he once beheld with horror, and through forgetfulness of those excellent mercies which he once hath experienced beyond all hope ! Surely it is the excess of folly to permit our passions and evil inclinations so to blind us, so entirely to mislead us, that we should not know the things which belong to our peace, till at length they are hidden from our eyes ! Yet such is the weak character of all who forget alike God's judgements and mercies, and carelessly pass the remainder of their lives, as if they had never been eye-witnesses of either. An unwise man indeed is he, as the Psalmist saith, " who doth not well consider this, and a fool, who doth not understand it."

But, my beloved brethren, I hope and trust that ye will be wise, that ye will ponder these things ; so shall ye understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. To assist your endeavours to the utmost
of

of my power, I shall conclude this discourse with a few plain reflections and faithful advice, corresponding with your present situation. Every way of life in which a man can engage, brings with it its own particular temptations. We find in every one of them certain sins which do most easily beset us ; and happy, indeed, it is for us in our latter days, if we perceive ourselves not only disengaged from the cares of the world, but so circumstanced as to be free from former temptations, and enabled to repent of those breaches of duty, into which we have been formerly betrayed. And this (blessed be God for it) is the peculiar happiness of your situation. Free from the toils of your profession and of such a busy life as may have taken away too much of your attention from the care of your souls, you may now make that, as indeed you ought, your first concern. The duties of this place are few and easy ; the performance of them

them is necessary to your own comfort ; and the respect you owe to those under whose protection and government, and instruction, you are placed, are highly conducive to that peaceful order, of which everyone of you well knows the value, who wishes to give up these his latter days to the establishment of his hope in Christ.

But if he means this, he must avoid those excesses too often fallen into by sea-faring men. If his mind is to be given up to the duties and hopes of religion, his understanding must not be injured, nor his senses stupified, by that dreadful vice which levels men with the beasts themselves. Those who enslave themselves to it, cannot prepare themselves for the kingdom of God : for drunkenness adds strength to every bad passion, and betrays men into the most horrible crimes. Who then will be so foolish as to forfeit his hopes of salvation for the mad pleasure, the momentary

tary gratification, this odious sin may seem to afford?

Much less will a wise man draw down God's anger on himself, by a crime which is attended with no gratification at all. He will not curse his brethren here, who hopes to live with the blessed hereafter. He will not blaspheme the name of God, who hopes he shall at his decease be permitted to join the angels and spirits of other just men made perfect, in ascribing blessing and honour to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. To conclude in one word: You have been conducted hither by God's providence, as St. Paul was once, to a place of refuge and rest from the stormy tempest. Cast off every sin, which, like the viper, may try to fasten upon you; and endeavour so to purify your whole lives and conversations, by the aid of the divine grace, that God, through Christ Jesus, may
bring

bring you, at the last, into that haven of peace, where ye would be. And may God accomplish this in you all, for the sake of the same Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, world without end. *Amen.*

A PRAYER which may be used by a Seaman in Greenwich Hospital, at private devotion.

O Almighty God, whose Providence hath protected me through a life of dangers, and placed me here in a refuge of peace; accept my humble and unfeigned thanks for these proofs of thy abundant mercy. Increase, O Lord, the gratitude of my heart: let the remembrance of Thy loving-kindness influence my whole behaviour, and enable me so to pass through any other trials, which may yet be allotted

lotted me, that through the merits of Thy Son, I may finally be accepted by Thee.

Bless, O Lord, Thy chosen servant George, our gracious Sovereign. Raise up continually brave and pious men, to be instruments in Thy hand for the defence of our King and his royal family, our religion, and our laws. Protect all those who are engaged in this service: gird them with Thy strength; direct them with Thy wisdom; and grant them the victory over all their enemies. Continue Thy favour to this institution, and to all concerned in its direction and government. Give a blessing to the religious instruction we receive: and vouchsafe to every one of us Thy heavenly grace, that by daily improvement in all godliness, we may at length arrive at eternal rest in Thy divine presence, through the merits and intercession of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen.*

Our

Our Father, which art in heaven
 Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom
 come. Thy will be done in earth, as it
 is in heaven. Give us this day our daily
 bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as
 we forgive them that trespass against us.
 And lead us not into temptation; But
 deliver us from evil: For Thine is the
 kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever. *Amen.*



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